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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR URIBE VISIT: RELATIONSHIP IN
TRANSITION

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[¶](#)1. (C) President Uribe will use his visit to reaffirm our strong bilateral ties. He will seek a timeline for approval of the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, and will want continued U.S. help against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and drug trafficking organizations. Uribe will stress Colombia's willingness to share its experience in fighting terrorism and drugs in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Mexico. His visit will allow us to address labor and human rights, and to push for greater progress on military reform, justice, and unions. We should use the visit to define our evolving bilateral relationship, and press Colombia to become a more active regional player on energy and the environment. Lastly, we can encourage Colombia's ambitious military-civilian effort to incorporate its most unstable regions into a broader political, economic and institutional fabric. End Summary.

WHAT'S ON PRESIDENT URIBE'S MIND:

[¶](#)2. (C) Colombia-U.S. Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA): Uribe is trying to clarify and define his relationship with this Administration. He was heartened by what he heard about the CTPA at the Summit of the Americas, and will seek our commitment to obtain passage, ideally including a timeline. For Uribe, the CTPA has more political than economic significance, and he feels exposed domestically by delays in its approval. He views the CTPA as a symbol of Colombia's standing in the international investment community and a signal to his neighbors that a strong U.S.-Colombia relationship continues. Colombia continues to pursue other trade deals with Canada, the European Union, and the European states of EFTA.

[¶](#)3. (C) Plan Colombia: Uribe recognizes that overall U.S. assistance will decline in coming years as Colombian capabilities develop through the nationalization of key programs. Still, Uribe will stress that Colombia has not yet won the fight against the FARC, National Liberation Army (ELN), atomized AUC paramilitaries, and other criminal groups. He will argue for continued U.S. assistance in key areas such as airlift, intelligence, and eradication. Uribe will highlight the GOC's National Consolidation Plan--an

ambitious military-civilian effort to incorporate Colombia's most unstable regions into its broader political, economic and institutional fabric--as the next step in this process. He will also note Colombia's willingness to conclude ongoing negotiations for an agreement giving us access to Colombian air facilities for counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and other purposes.

¶ 14. (C) Strategic International Partner: Focused on internal crises, Colombia has historically punched under its weight internationally, but Uribe has led Colombia toward higher profile engagement in the hemisphere and beyond. Colombia is helping Mexico and the Central Americans combat drug trafficking through regional training, law enforcement cooperation, and information-sharing. Colombian police lead the UN Mission in Haiti's anti-kidnapping training program. Colombia also recently agreed with Brazil to boost trade and counter-narcotics cooperation along their shared border. On economic integration, Colombia is promoting biofuels in Central America, as well as energy integration with the isthmus and the Dominican Republic. Uribe is concerned that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez supports the FARC and undermines democracy in the region and at home. He will not express these concerns in public.

¶ 15. (C) Uribe has offered to send limited numbers of engineering and special forces to Afghanistan under both the Spanish component of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the U.S. 7th Special Forces Group in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Colombia, the U.S., and Spain are presently discussing details of the possible deployments. No formal agreement yet exists between Colombia

and the Spanish; both parties are looking to the USG for logistical support. Colombia is eager to contribute, but not to divert resources needed to face the FARC and other internal threats.

¶ 16. (C) Reelection: Uribe is unlikely to raise the issue, but his effort to amend the Constitution to allow him to run for a possible third term in 2010 dominates Colombia's political agenda. Opinion polls show his reelection bid enjoys substantial popular support, but the required constitutional reform process faces significant political and legal hurdles.

Critics charge a third Uribe term would undermine Colombia's democratic institutions. We have said the reelection issue is for the Colombian people to decide in accordance with their constitutional procedures. We have also suggested privately that domestic rancor over reelection would complicate some issues on the bilateral agenda, such as the CTPA. We could work with any of the candidates likely to succeed him in the event that Uribe's reelection effort founders.

OPPORTUNITIES

¶ 17. (C) Uribe's visit offers opportunities to lock in Colombia's strategic cooperation in the regional effort on drugs, push for progress on human rights and labor issues, better coordinate our support for Colombia's efforts to consolidate Plan Colombia's gains, and promote cooperation on energy and environmental issues.

--Drugs: The UN reports double-digit drops in coca cultivation and yield, and ONDCP reports increased seizures have increased the price of cocaine 105 percent and reduced its purity 35 percent since 2007. Nevertheless, Colombia remains the major supplier of cocaine to the U.S. market.

--Colombia's International Role: Mexico cannot win its fight against drug trafficking without continued progress in Colombia. We should encourage Colombia to deepen developing partnerships with Mexico, Central America, and Brazil on countering narcotics trafficking. Police from a dozen countries, including Mexico, El Salvador, Haiti, and Afghanistan have trained at elite Colombian counternarcotics

facilities. Colombia could serve as a counter-narcotics regional training center, give key technical, intelligence and law enforcement support, and provide important "lessons learned" to its neighbors. It also is a voice for moderation and democratic values within regional and subregional hemispheric fora such as the OAS and the Union of South American Nations. Colombia now has the most professional police and combat-experienced armed forces in the region. The GOC's offer on Afghanistan, in addition to its role in Haiti, creates the opportunity to apply Colombia's considerable security and counter-narcotics experience at a global level.

--Human and Labor Rights: The GOC has made strides in reducing human rights abuses and increasing the space for civil society and political opponents, but Colombia continues to fall short of many international human rights standards. Uribe's visit allows us to push for continued accountability and reform in the military (mainly the Army) where extrajudicial killings continue at a reduced--but still worrying--rate. We should encourage investigations of human and labor rights abuses, note the need for better protection of workers' rights, and highlight the importance of the balance of powers in a democracy. Colombia is poised to introduce sweeping civil rights legislation in July that will promote greater equality for the country's Afro-Colombian community, which makes up some 20 percent of the population.

--Consolidation of Plan Colombia Gains: The GOC is adjusting its counternarcotics and counterterrorism strategy to focus on building civilian state presence and viable, legal economies in strategically targeted conflict and post-conflict areas. The effort integrates institution building and alternative development programs with security and counternarcotics efforts. The initial results are promising. We have worked closely with the Colombians on the

strategy's design and are adjusting our programs to better support this effort. If successful, the approach will provide important lessons for our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. It may also allow us to reduce our foreign assistance relationship to a long-term, sustainable level.

--Energy and Environment: Colombia is the second largest biofuels producer in the region (after Brazil), and has significant coal, oil and gas resources. Championing the environment does not come naturally to Uribe, but we have an opportunity to encourage Colombian leadership in the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) launched at the Summit. We should urge Colombia to accelerate efforts for electricity connection to Central America, and encourage them to share expertise on biofuels and energy infrastructure security.

Brownfield